



Finding Ireland Ancestry Using Civil Registration

Joni Kesler, Research Specialist, AG®

FamilySearch
keslerjl@familySearch.org

What is Civil Registration?

Civil Registration is the recording and registration of births, marriage, and deaths by a government.

Why Civil Registration of Vital Events?

- Birth records for identity purposes
- Proof of age and legitimacy for inheritance purposes
- Identification for employment
- Civil Registration Office marriages
- Recording of statistical data for vital events

When Did Civil Registration Begin?

- Beginning April 1, 1845 civil register office and non-Catholic marriage registration began.
- On January 1, 1864, birth, death and Catholic marriage registration was started.

Process for Civil Registration of Vital Events

- Individuals were required to register a birth or death at the local register office within three months of the event.
- Marriages were usually registered by the church or the civil official performing the marriage.
- Late fees were assessed when an event was not registered within the three month period.
- An individual went to the local register office to register an event.
- The local register office recorded the event in the birth, marriage, or death registration book.
- When the book was full, the local registrar sent it to the superintendent registrar.
- The superintendent registrar forwarded copies of all of the registrations to the General Register Office.
- About 15% of early births and marriages not registered.
- Deaths not registered may have been higher.

What Information is Recorded?

Births:

- Superintendent Registrar's District
- Registrar's District

- District
- Poor Law Union
- County of birth
- Date and place of birth, usually a townland
- Name if any
- Gender of child
- Name, surname, and dwelling place of father
- Name and surname, and maiden surname of mother (indicated by “formerly”)
- Rank or profession of father
- Signature, qualification, and residence of informant
- When registered
- Signature of registrar
- Baptismal name if added after registration of birth and date
- Person present at the birth was to register the birth within three months

Marriages

- Registrar’s District
- Parish where marriage took place
- When married
- Names and surnames of bride and groom
- Age
- Condition of marital status
- Rank or profession
- Residences at time of marriage
- Father’s name and surname
- Father’s rank and profession
- Marriage by license or banns
- Signatures of bride and groom and witnesses
- All marriages to be recorded in a civil register after the ceremony by the minister

Deaths

- Superintendent Registrar’s District
- Registrar’s District
- District
- Poor Law Union
- Date and place of death
- Name and surname of deceased
- Gender
- Condition
- Age at last birthday
- Rank, profession or occupation
- Certified cause of death
- Signature, qualification, and residence of informant
- When registered
- Signature of registrar

Before You Begin

At least have:

- Full name
- Birth date or year of birth

- City or town of birth
- Registration District
- A spouse's name, names of parents, or names of siblings

Tools for Finding the Registration District

- *Ireland Townland Database* – <http://www.thecore.com/seanruad/>
- *Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* – www.libraryireland.com/topog
- *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland* – <https://archive.org/details/parliamentaryga00unkngoog>
- *New Genealogical Atlas of Ireland* – www.visionofbritain.org/
- Maps and Gazetteers – www.genuki.org.uk – check under both country & county level

Where to Find Indexes and Images

FamilySearch.org

Republic of Ireland

Indexes to Civil Registration

- Births and deaths, 1864-1921
- Marriages 1845-1921
 - FamilySearch.org
 - Historical Records Collection
 - Search using wildcards
 - Use an * with one letter to represent one or more characters
 - Use a ? to represent one letter
- Registrations (digital images and microfilm at FHL and FHCS)
 - Births 1864 to 1913 & 1930-1955
 - Marriages 1845-1870
 - Deaths 1864-1870

Northern Ireland

- Birth, Marriage, and Death 1922-1959
- Indexes and registrations
- Microfilm only at FHL

General Register Office Republic of Ireland

Irishgenealogy.ie

- Civil Registration Indexes
 - Births over 100 years
 - Marriages over 75 years
 - Deaths over 50 years
- Digital Images (free)
 - Births 1864-1915
 - Marriages 1882-1940
 - Deaths 1891-1965

General Register Office Northern Ireland

Geni.nidirect.gov.uk

- Civil Registration

- Indexes and Images
 - Births over 100 years
 - Marriages over 75 years
 - Deaths over 50 years
- Index Search
 - Free with 1 credit
 - Credits cost £0.50 each
 - Enhanced index 2 credits
 - Images 5 credits

Roots Ireland.ie (subscription)

Civil registration and church record indexes for many counties. To see what records are indexed for each county, click on “Online Sources” at the top of the page and then choose the county you want to see.

Can’t Find an Event Registration?

Possible reasons for not finding an entry:

- Event may not have been registered.
- May have been registered the next quarter.
- Catholic marriage registrations were not recorded consistently.

Where to Search if an Event is not Found

Contact the Superintendent Registrar to have a search done of their indexes.

- Republic of Ireland: <http://www.civilregistrationservice.ie/> then choose Registrars of Births Deaths and Marriages
- Northern Ireland: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/district-registrars-northern-ireland>

Search church record indexes of baptisms and marriages at the following subscription websites:

- Ancestry.com
- RootsIreland.ie
- findmypast.ie

Things to Remember

- Try various indexes if you can’t find an event.
- Look in other quarters because of the late registration fee.
- Contact the Superintendent Registrar to see if a search can be made of their indexes.
- Search for church records if unable to find an event in Civil Registration indexes.

Online Sources

- FamilySearch Research Wiki: https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/Ireland_Genealogy
- FamilySearch.org: Ireland Historical Records
<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/list/?page=1&countryId=1927084>
- Irish Genealogy Toolkit: <http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/>
- Irishgenealogy.ie GRO: www.irishgenealogy.ie
- General Register Office of Northern Ireland GRONI: <https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk/>
- National Library of Ireland: <http://www.nli.ie/en/parish-register.aspx>

- Findmypast: www.findmypast.ie
- Ancestry: www.ancestry.com
- RootsIreland: www.rootsireland.ie
- National Library of Ireland: <http://www.nli.ie/en/parish-register.aspx>
- The National Archives of Ireland: <http://www.nationalarchives.ie/genealogy1/genealogy-records/introduction/>
- The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/public-record-office-northern-ireland-proni/search-archives-online>

Bibliography

Grenham, John. *Tracing your Irish Ancestors*, 3rd edition. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2006. FHL book 941.5 D27gj 2006.

Maxwell, Ian. *Tracing your Ancestors in Northern Ireland*. Edinburgh: The Stationary Office, 1997. FHL book 941.6 A3mi.

Radford, Dwight and Kyle Betit. *Ireland: A Genealogical Guide*. Salt Lake City: The Irish at Home and Abroad, 1998. FHL book 941.5 D27bkj, FHL film 1145947 item 3.

Ireland Department of Health. *History of Registration in Ireland*. Welfare Ireland, 1995. <https://www.welfare.ie/en/downloads/GRO-History.pdf>